

# Office of Attorney General Terry Goddard



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Budget Cuts Put Public Safety at Risk, Pima County Attorney Says

(Phoenix, Ariz. – January 30, 2009) Attorney General Terry Goddard today released a statement of serious concern from Pima County Attorney Barbara LaWall regarding the impact of cuts to the Attorney General's Office in the proposed state budget.

"The points made by Barbara LaWall are accurate and deserve the urgent attention of State Legislators," Goddard said. "The proposed cuts to my Office will diminish public safety across Arizona."

County Attorney LaWall stated:

"I am deeply concerned about a proposed \$4 million cut to the Attorney General's budget. This would have a severe and adverse impact on my Office (and other county attorney's, too), which we simply could not under any scenario absorb. The AG is mandated to do all criminal appeals for every County Attorney's Office in Arizona. In Pima County alone they number in the thousands every year. They handle most statewide criminal case conflicts, all federal habeas matters on death penalty capital murder cases and all post-conviction petitions as well. If the AG does not have the necessary resources to pursue these cases, we are left with a void, the magnitude of which would create a tsunami of unanswered criminal appeals, post-conviction petitions and capital murder cases.

"There is no way a County Attorney's Office could take on these additional duties and responsibilities. We are already drowning in criminal cases. My Office reviews over 11,000 criminal felony cases each year. I am operating under a hiring freeze, numerous vacant positions, and a \$1.5 million dollar budget reduction for next fiscal year. I cannot take on any more responsibilities, which also means that as the County Attorney, I would be unable to handle any requests for prosecution of conflict cases from other jurisdictions in Arizona.

"Such a budget cut would be an unmitigated disaster to every County Attorney's Office and pose a severe threat to the public safety of the community.

"Terry Goddard understands the need for every agency to take cuts and says that he could absorb up to a \$2 million cut. A \$4 million cut to the AG's budget would send the entire criminal justice system in Arizona in a topsy-turvy spin from which we could not recover."

For more information, contact Anne Hilby at (602) 725-2200.

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